

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MUNICH 04351

FOR EUR/EE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, SOPN
SUBJECT: DEATH OF GEORGIO MARCOV

REF: (A) FRISBIE/GILMORE(DEPT) TELECON, (B) FRISBIE/
HANNON (LONDON) TELECON

1. CONGEN ASSUMES ADDRESSEES ARE GENERALLY FAMILIAR WITH
BIZARRE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING DEATH OF GEORGIO
MARCOV, WHO ALLEGEDLY POISONED BY BEING POKED IN THIGH
WITH UMBRELLA ON LONDON STREET. MARCOV, WHO LEFT BULGARIA
IN 1969, WAS EMPLOYED BY BBC, BUT ALSO HAD FREE-LANCED
FOR BULGARIAN SERVICE OF RFE SINCE 1975.

2. TO COPE WITH ANTICIPATED INQUIRIES, RFE MANAGEMENT
PREPARED PRESS GUIDANCE NOTING THAT MARCOV, A TALENTED
AUTHOR AND DRAMATIST, HAD BEEN COMMISSIONED TO WRITE
SCRIPTS ON CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS IN BULGARIA AND HAD ALSO
WRITTEN PROGRAMS DETAILING HIS OWN EXPERIENCES WHEN HE
STILL LIVED IN BULGARIA. HE NORMALLY WROTE ONE 20-MINUTE
SCRIPT PER WEEK. PRESS GUIDANCE NOTED THAT A SERIES OF
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SCRIPTS CALLED "MEETINGS WITH TODOR ZHIVKOV," BROADCAST
LATE 1977 AND EARLY 1978, WAS HIS MOST NOTEABLE SERIES.
MARCOV DESCRIBED ZHIVKOV'S INITIAL FRIENDLINESS AND GOOD
HUMOR, AND THEN TRACED HIS GROWING SELF ISOLATION AND
SUSPICIOUSNESS; HOWEVER, A BASIC UNDERSTANDING "FOR
ZHIVKOV AS A MAN" WAS ALWAYS APPARENT. SCRIPTS
CHARACTERIZED AS "GENERALLY CRITICAL" OF PRESENT DAY

BULGARIA, BUT TONE "ALWAYS RESTRAINED."

3. AT INVITATION OF BRITAIN'S INDEPENDENT TELEVISION NETWORK (ITN), RFE DEPUTY DIRECTOR JAMES BROWN CONSENTED TO SHORT INTERVIEW AT LOCAL TV STUDIO; INTERVIEW WAS TAPED FOR LATER SHOWING ON ITN. CONGEN UNDERSTANDS FROM REF B THAT 10 P.M. NEWS SEPTEMBER 12 SHOWED RECONSTRUCTION OF UMBRELLA INCIDENT, FOLLOWED BY INTERVIEWS WITH SOME OF MARCOV'S BBC COLLEAGUES, WHO STATED THAT NOTHING WHICH MARCOV HAD DONE FOR BBC COULD POSSIBLY HAVE LED TO INCIDENT. TELECAST WENT ON TO NOTE THAT MARCOV HAD ALSO WORKED FOR RFE; FOLLOWING STILL SHOT OF RFE HEADQUARTERS IN MUNICH, PROGRAM CARRIED ABOUT ONE MINUTE OF INTERVIEW WITH BROWN. BROWN ESSENTIALLY FOLLOWED PRESS GUIDANCE NOTED ABOVE, AND MADE CLEAR THAT NONE OF MARCOV'S WORK FOR RFE WAS OF A NATURE WHICH COULD HAVE LED TO INCIDENT.

4. RFE/RL MANAGEMENT CONCERNED OVER MARCOV INCIDENT AND HAS TOLD CONGEN THAT MARCOV -- WHO ALLEGEDLY FELT SOMEWHAT RESTRICTED AT BBC AND WISHED "TO PAINT ON A LARGER CANVASS" -- HAD BEEN CONSIDERING FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT WITH RFE. WHILE NO FIRM ARRANGEMENTS HAD BEEN REACHED (AND NO VACANCY EXISTED), RFE AND MARCOV WERE DEFINITELY INTERESTED. TAKEN TOGETHER WITH CASE OF VLADIMIR KOSTOV, WHO IS JOINING RFE ON FULL-TIME BASIS AND WHO WAS
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RECENTLY BADLY BEATEN IN PARIS (OSTENSIBLY BY BULGARIANS), RFE FEARS THIS MAY INDICATE PATTERN OF ATTEMPTED INTIMIDATION.

5. COMMENT. WHILE RFE/RL OBVIOUSLY DOES NOT WANT NOR NEED ANY PUBLICITY LINKING THEM TO SUCH CLOAK AND DAGGER ACTIVITIES AS MARCOV CASE, THEY DID NOT FEEL THEY COULD REFUSE ITN REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW. THUS FAR, IT DOES NOT APPEAR THAT MARCOV'S RFE CONNECTION HAS BEEN OVER EMPHASIZED. SEPTEMBER 13 "STARS AND STRIPES" CARRIES AP STORY ON INCIDENT DATED LONDON WHICH MERELY MENTIONS FREE LANCING FOR RFE AND DEUTSCHE WELLE IN ADDITION TO BBC BROADCASTING. SEPTEMBER 13 "INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE" CARRIES UPI STORY FROM LONDON WHICH DOES NOT MENTION RFE CONNECTION. SEPTEMBER 13 "SUEDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG," "MÜNCHNER MERKUR" AND "ABEND ZEITUNG" ALL CARRY SHORT ITEMS, NONE OF WHICH MENTIONS RFE. FRISBIE

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